



**Walpole Recreation Committee
Meeting Held on Wednesday, January 12th, 2022
via Zoom conference call - 6:00 p.m.**

Recreation Committee Present

Regular Members

Present

- Joseph Grant, *Chair*
- Annelise Fair
- Michael McGrath

Not Present

Richard McCarthy, *Vice-Chair*

Associate Members

Present

- Lorraine Dundon
- Brad Hickey
- Jeff Hutnick
- Doug Shea

Not Present

Marie Jeanlouis

Staff Present

- Brendan Croak, *Recreation Director*
- Justin Monta, *Superintendent Parks & Cemeteries*

Call to Order

Chairperson Grant called the meeting to order at 6:02 p.m.

Minutes

- On a motion made by Mr. McGrath, seconded by Ms. Fair, the Committee voted 3-0-0 to approve the November 10th, 2021 meeting minutes.

Appointment

- Sandeep Chiniwar, *Lagaan Cricket Club*

Mr. Chiniwar gave a brief presentation to the Committee with hopes to further discussion about a permanent installation of a cricket pitch in Walpole.

Chairperson Grant noted that both the Department and the Committee had been approached in the past with similar presentations and requests. Mr. Chiniwar confirmed that, while these individuals are part of the same *league*, they are a separate organization from Lagaan Cricket Club.

Chairperson Grant had some concerns that the installation of a permanent pitch would impede upon the numerous existing sports in town and create a hazardous playing surface for the multi-purpose fields. Additionally, there was some discussion about damaging the irrigation that is located at various sites in town, and whether or not the installation would pose a problem. Superintendent Monta spoke further about maintenance and construction issues that may arise.

Mr. Shea inquired about the cost to install a permanent pitch. Mr. Chiniwar replied that the installation would be somewhere around \$10,000. Mr. McGrath inquired whether or not there was space at the South Walpole Community Athletic Complex available to install a pitch. Director Croak stated that, due to the existing field layout at the complex, it is his opinion that a permanent cricket pitch would not be possible at that location.

Mr. Chiniwar stated that their season took place from May - September on the weekends, and that they were only looking for around 20 total weekend days. Each game is around six hours long and would typically run from around 12:00 - 6:00 p.m.

Director's Report

Recreation Programming

- Holiday Lights Tour

Director Croak noted that the Department's annual Holiday Lights map was a great success this year with over 70 addresses submitted, and close to 20,000 views of the map itself.

- Thanksgiving Shoebox Parade

The 2nd *Annual Shoebox Thanksgiving Day Parade* took place again this year, with close to 20 children participating and creating shoebox "floats". The Department posted a video of the parade on Facebook, which was viewed close to 1,000 times.

- Letters to Santa

Director Croak mentioned that the Recreation Department had a mailbox set up outside for letters to be dropped for delivery to Santa at the North Pole. The Department received over 65 letters. Each child was then mailed a handmade response from Santa, based on the information that was included in their letter. Director Croak was happy to report that the Department received numerous phone calls and comments from parents saying that the personalized letters from Santa were a great touch - the word 'magical' was used multiple times. Director Croak mentioned that this has been something that he's wanted to do for quite some time. With this year's success, the Department plans to lean heavily into this activity next year, with a nicer mailbox, more marketing, etc.

- Winter/Spring Programming

Winter programming started up a few weeks ago and Spring Planning is now underway. Registration numbers continue to climb, but Director Croak stated that the Department is still a long way off from where they were prior to the pandemic. It appears as though parents are still a bit hesitant about having their child participate with in-person activities, given the current state of affairs. Director Croak anticipates that it will be a slow climb back to where the Department was. He stated that, as always, the Department will continue to adjust and do their best to ensure that numbers are as healthy as possible. With the return to outdoor programming, numbers should slowly increase.

- Summer Planning

The Department is in the early phases of summer planning and talks are underway with vendors to choose dates for some of the department's sports clinics this summer. There are early plans to potentially hold Walpole Woods back at Jarvis Farm this year, but nothing is confirmed at this point. Programming has not taken place at the property in a few years, and Director Croak stated that there is going to be a considerable amount of preparation and money that needs to be focused on the property to get it back up and running. There was some discussion that pricing for summer programs can increase. Director Croak said that they will look into this. Staffing continues to be a concern as the department has lost, or will lose, many long-time staff members. With the pandemic, numerous years have gone by without the need for staff, which has left the department thin with experienced individuals. Director Croak stated that the department is going to post summer jobs on February 1st, with hopes of many applicants. The department will explore contacting High School administration, and local colleges, to spread the word about staffing vacancies.

- Saturday Basketball

Week 1 of Saturday Basketball took place this past weekend with no issues whatsoever. Recreation Coordinator, Rich Lamoury, has done a great job coordinating the volunteers and staff members and providing them with a weekly curriculum and drills. This year, the Department is back to holding the program at Fisher School, as well as Blackburn

Hall. Two five-week sessions will occur. Session 1 will take place from January 8th - February 5th and Session 2 will occur from February 26th - March 26th.

- Employment Postings

Director Croak mentioned there is a posting for a Building and Program Monitor that remains unfilled. The Department will keep this posting until filled.

Additionally, the Department is exploring the possibility of adding an additional Recreation Coordinator position. As previously mentioned, Director Croak is concerned about staffing and the department needs to make sure that appropriate supervision and oversight is present at all programs. The idea would be to hire a full-time position sooner than later, so they have time to get acclimated to the department prior to the summer so they can dive right in.

- FY '23 Department Budget

The department budget was submitted, and there were some lines that were reduced a bit by Town Administration, for a total of around \$2,000. Director Croak stated that the reductions were not too substantial that would require the department to make any major adjustments. As always, Director Croak will continue to keep a close on the budget to make sure that the department is where it needs to be.

New Business

Smiling Eyes Sub-Committee Reorganization

With Bill Buckley's resignation from the Recreation Committee in October, there is a vacancy on the Smiling Eyes Sub-Committee. Mr. Hickey volunteered.

- On a motion made by Mr. McGrath, seconded by Ms. Fair, the Committee voted 3-0-0 in favor of Brad Hickey filling the vacancy on the Smiling Eyes Sub-Committee.

Athletic Fields Update

A Fields Workshop took place last week, with members of the youth sports organizations and Justin Monta of the Parks Department. Director Croak stated that it was a very constructive meeting that allowed members of each group to get on the same page, with regard to the level of maintenance and services that are provided by the Parks Department. Additionally, groups were given the opportunity to ask Superintendent Monta any specific questions they may have.

Director Croak noted that the Spring Field Permit Application window opened up on Monday, January 10th. Applications can be submitted any time between now and Valentine's Day. At that point, the Department will process requests and issue permits for the spring season, which is scheduled to begin on April 1st. Director Croak anticipates there to be quite a challenge this year navigating all of the requests, which may pose an issue for private rentals to occur. This is a problem, as 75% of the field permit revenue that

is generated comes from the private rentals that take place. Most of the revenue received is put towards the cost of turf replacement for the three synthetic fields, which will occur in the next 10 years or so. Any remaining money is utilized for other field-related capital items or improvements that may be needed.

Construction for the basketball court at the South Walpole Community Athletic Complex is underway and in the very early phases. Fundraising for the bathrooms and snack building is ongoing at this time.

Complete replacement of the Carolyn Woodward Playground, next to the Splash Pad, is scheduled to take place this spring, with hopes that it will be complete prior to the summer pool season.

Update - 300th Anniversary Committee

Director Croak gave a brief update on the progress of the 300th Anniversary Committee.

Update - Master Plan Steering Committee

Mr. McGrath updated the Committee on the Master Plan Steering Committee. There was an event that took place in November at the High School. Members are also reaching out to various RTMs to coordinate “Kitchen Meetings”, which will allow for small-group discussion to take place.

Old Business

- N/A

Public Comment

- There was some further discussion about the Cricket presentation that was given earlier in the night. Mr. Hickey suggested that the Norfolk Agricultural High School is a potential location for the pitch to be constructed.

Adjournment

- On a motion made by Ms. Fair, seconded by Mr. McGrath, the Committee voted 3-0-0 to adjourn at 7:39 p.m.